



THE MONITOR

NEWSLETTER OF THE HOOSIER HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

A non-profit organization dedicated to the education of its membership and the conservation of all amphibians and reptiles

Volume 26 Number 11

November 2015

HHS monthly meeting
Holiday Park Nature Center
Wednesday November 18th 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Roger Carter HHS

Topic: "Herping" Southern Illinois Throughout the Years"

Roger Carter and his wife Holly have been charter members of HHS since it started. They have often been referred to as the "backbone of our society" because of their service to our club. Roger and Holly have often made the six hour trip to Southern Illinois searching for "herps" and documenting their efforts. Southern Illinois is a "herping mecca" because the marshy swamps, limestone cliffs and rock out crops offers a pristine environment for a wide variety of reptiles and amphibians. Located in this area is the world famous "Snake Road" and in the early spring and late fall these herps migrate from their hibernation sites to the lush habitat and back making it a great time to photograph these species. Besides "Snake Road" they have found similar sites in the area that often reveal water moccasins or cottonmouths as the major attraction. In fact this past trip Roger found thirty four of these venomous snakes! **Be sure to attend this meeting and see what else they have discovered in these trips!**

Your nominees for 2016 officer positions:

President – Jim Horton (unopposed)

Vice-President – Dale Schoentrup, Neil Jones, Mary Hyton, Pat Hammond

Treasurer – Roger Carter (unopposed)

Secretary – Holly Carter (unopposed)

Sergent-At-Arms – Will Brown (unopposed)

Welcome New Members!

New members

Tyler Kinkead

Renewals

Michael Beard, Robert Tyler
Mike McNeeley, Stokes Family
David Stahl, Janice Kucera, David Miller

Last month's meeting

By Jim Horton

Mike Pingleton always delivers an excellent talk leaving you yearning for the outdoors.

His talk focused on herping parts of California and Nevada where he had spent some time last summer. The Mohave Desert was the main area of their eight day field herping excursions.

Their first destination was near the Bakersfield, CA airport. Here they found a Northern pacific rattlesnake (S.pac). Shortly after a walk along railroad tracks, Mike encountered a man with a rifle telling them to leave. In all his years, Mike had never had this happen. They quickly avoided any problems by promptly leaving the area. But not long after, they found a lifer, a Bakersfield Legless Lizard - *Anniella grinnelli*.

His group headed East near a place called Jawbone Canyon. A cool front had moved in and temps were below 70 degrees F. They did manage to find a banded gecko, gopher snake, leaf-nosed snake, a night snake, and two Mohave glossy snakes.

They moved on to the South for road cruising. That night they came upon a nicely colored shovel-nosed snake (one of three on their target list) and a desert glossy snake. A rosy boa was found before the night ended.

A day hunt in the area revealed a Wiggin's night lizard (another lifer). During a hike in the hills near streams they found a southwest black head snake (Tantilla), two-striped garter, and a California chorus frog.

Onward to Escondido in an open field that is soon to be developed, they immediately found an adult California kingsnake. The pattern was aberrant, similar to those bred in captivity. Another S.pac rattler, a Skilton's skink, red racer, San Diego night snake and his favorite, a Southwestern thread snake, which looks more like a tiny earthworm.

A visit to the San Diego Wild Animal Park was fun but they couldn't pass up a hike behind the facilities. Here they found a beautiful male granite spiny lizard that displayed brilliant blues on its underside, a California striped racer and Western long nose snakes were also found here.

Back up north, they found one of everyone's favorite, a Northern rubber boa! A Southern alligator lizard was also a great find for the group. Two salamanders from the area, a nice slender and a yellow *Ensatina* completed the hike.

Back to the Jawbone area, they found another glossy snake and a Mohave sidewinder.

Near the Greenhorn Mountains they found some of the larger desert dwelling lizards. Desert iguanas, chuckwallas, and a longnose lizard were found here. The cooler temps allowed them to get awesome photos of these normally skittish, quick moving species.

The famous Death Valley was in their sights next. Known for extreme heat and arid conditions, Death Valley was cooler than it had been in years – some 65 degrees. But that didn't stop the herping.

A Panamint rattlesnake (lifer) and a Nevada shovel nose (another lifer and second on the target list) were quickly found near dusk. Road cruising the area yielded a Sonora ground snake, desert night snake, and a black collared lizard.

Lastly, it was back up north to Las Vegas where Mike would eventually end up on a plane back to the Midwest.

The Newberry Mountain ranges are where they found a beautiful red racer and a desert iguana in the remainder of the daylight hours. A short night cruise brought a Southwest speckled rattlesnake to the roadside. A Mohave shovelnose snake (third and last species on their list!) and a Western diamondback rattlesnake also had shown up that night. But my personal favorite was the last pic of the night and their last herp of the trip – a brilliantly colored ground snake! It was absolutely stunning.

Yes, this talk has given me (and I'm sure most of the audience) *desert herping fever!*



The Monitor is printed courtesy of: **Harding Poorman**



HHS at Holliday Park Fall Festival

Ed Ferrer

On Sunday November 1st. Holliday Park held its annual "Fall Festival" from 1:30-4:30. This celebration offered many activities for the public both inside the nature center and outside throughout the park.



Attendees were able to participate in bowling, cornhole, go on a scavenger hunt, roast marshmallows, listen to a concert by Matt Roush and have snacks provided by the Friends of Holliday Park. The weather was perfect with temperatures in the 70's and there was a huge crowd throughout the day.



The Hoosier Herp Society provided a display of reptiles and amphibians in the first classroom and was a huge hit with the visitors.



They were able to see and in some cases touch or handle and photograph a wide variety of snakes, lizards, turtles, tortoises, frogs, toads and salamanders.

It was a great way for HHS members to educate the public about these often misunderstood animals and encourage people to better appreciate nature. I noticed some families return for a second time to get another look at the

animals.



Our exhibit was part of our partnership with Holliday Park that allows us to have our monthly meetings at the park and the park staff were very impressed with our display and how we interacted with the people.



A special thank you goes to HHS members Jim Horton, Roger and Holly Carter, Neil Jones, Dale and Lori Schoentrup, Pat Hammond, Ed Ferrer, Heather and Kira White, Katie Kolcun, Angela Thomas, and Mary Hylton for making helping make this day such a huge success.

President's message

Jim Horton

Hello to all and happy November!

I'd like to thank our members for renewing each year. Without you, we have no HHS. We're super-happy to have you back!

And thank you to our members who show up every month to share your love of herpetology!

This will be our last issue of the Monitor for the year. We'll send out a flier for the Holiday Party early next month.

The **30th Midwest Herpetological Symposium** was another huge success! Next year this event will be hosted by the Chicago Herpetological Society. Don't miss it!

Last month we took nominations for 2016 HHS board elections. We will vote this month. There is still time to get your name on the ballot. Our own Roger Carter will be guest speaker this month with a presentation on the famous *Snake Road*.

We have a date for the HHS holiday party – **December 12** at **Dale's Family Dining** in the Beech Grove area. We'll have dinner and other fun activities. You will be sent an invitation. Please R.S.V.P.

Southern Illinois 2015

By Roger Carter

On the last weekend of September I went to southern Illinois to go to some of our favorite herping spots. No one else expressed interest in going, maybe because I had intended to be there Saturday, Sunday and Monday and Holly had some re-hab animals that need constant care. I almost didn't go but I decided I needed to get away.

I got a late start Saturday morning so I got down there late afternoon. I went to a spot on the east side of the state and drove the back roads to get to a parking lot where I could walk a trail to get to some old roofing tin to flip. As I started my walk, two dogs from a neighboring farm showed up and hiked the trail with me. One was a yellow Labrador and the other was a brindle colored pit bull. I was a little nervous about the pit bull but both dogs were among the friendliest dogs I have ever seen, they just couldn't stop licking. If I stopped to look at something or to turn over a small log to see if anything was under it, the dogs patiently waited for me to resume my hike. I did find one of the large millipedes under a log. Before long I did get to the tin and found an adult black rat snake, *Pantherophis obsoletus*, comfortably coiled up. I don't like the new scientific name; I prefer the old name, *elaphe obsoleta obsoleta*.



After continuing down the trail for a little while, with my canine entourage, I decided to call it a day and go have dinner and get a room for the night.

Sunday morning I decided to go to Snake Road. The sky was overcast and I wasn't sure if I was going to see many animals. Driving down the levee road to get to the parking lot is always a very nice sight to see the bluffs that the area is known for. There was a road kill diamondback water snake, *Nerodia rhombifer rhombifer*, on the levee road that some turkey vultures had been pecking at but they flew away as I drove up to that spot.

I drove to the parking lot, stopped, applied bug spray, gathered up my back pack and camera and hit the road. I hadn't walked maybe a few city blocks when I saw my first cottonmouth water moccasin, *Agkistrodon piscivorus*, of the day.



This was a young adult about twenty to twenty-five inches long and had just left the water a short time ago because its body was still covered in the green duckweed that covers the water. As I was taking pictures of this snake it occurred to me that it would be so cool if the green duckweed was part of its normal pattern. Imagine green dots on a dark background.

There were a lot of people walking the road and, for a while, I walked with a guy who came up from Tennessee mostly to look for birds but also looked for reptiles and amphibians. We met a guy I knew from Minnesota, Dav Kauffman, and his two friends and we stopped to chat. They were going back to the parking lot to begin their ten hour drive home. There was also a group of four guys

who were there from North Carolina. It is always a pleasure to meet strangers who are there for the same reason I was and have an interest in the same animals that I wanted to see. As we meet each other everyone asks "See anything?" and we tell each other what we have seen so far.

There were a lot more water moccasins, some of them on the road and some of them at the base of the bluffs, there was one rough green snake, *Opheodrys aestivus*,



and lots of small frogs jumping out of our way as we walked. One of the guys from North Carolina showed us a timber rattlesnake, *Crotalus horridus*, which had stuffed itself into a cavity in the bluffs several feet above the level of the road.



The rattlesnake was seen in that cavity on Saturday. The location in the bluffs where the rattlesnake was "holed" up was, maybe, three-fourths of the way to the next entrance.

It was my original intention to walk the road to the next entrance, then walk back to where I parked and then walk the road again. Instead of walking to the next entrance I started back to where I parked and encountered a guy who just came out of the woods onto the road. I started talking to him and found out that his name was Tony and he was an intern for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. As we told each other what we have seen so far I found out that Tony has never seen a timber rattlesnake in the wild so we went back and I showed him where it was in the bluffs. Tony prepared his camera and took several pictures and I decided to take some more pictures.

We started walking down the road to where I was parked (Tony had parked at the other end) and we saw more water moccasins plus one yellow belly water snake, *Nerodia erythrogaster*, and more people walking the road.



We chatted with them and one guy showed us some pictures that he had in his camera of a red milk snake, *Lampropeltis Triangulum sypila*, and a mud snake, *Farancia abacura*, that he saw on Saturday. I have only seen one red milk snake

on that road many years ago and I have never seen a mud snake, alive or road kill.

The clouds had become darker and, as Tony and I were getting close to where I parked, it started to sprinkle a little bit. Tony decided to go back to his car before getting caught in the rain so we shook hands "It was nice to meet you." and parted. It didn't rain, just sprinkled a little and slowly quit. The sky was still dark and, expecting it to rain any minute plus it was late afternoon, I called it a day and left to have dinner at the local Mexican restaurant and back to the motel for the night.

Monday morning was overcast and the pavement was damp from a little bit of rain overnight. I was going to go back to the east side of the state but decided to go back to Snake Road instead and I was glad that I did. I hadn't walked maybe a couple of city blocks when I ran into Scott Ballard of the Illinois DNR and Tony who I met on Sunday. Holly and I knew Scott from years ago when we were both active members of the Chicago Herpetological Society. They were both observing a gray tree frog, *Hyla versicolor*, that was perched on the thick stem of a plant and Tony was taking pictures of the frog. We visited a little and walked the road together seeing more water moccasins and another yellow belly water snake that was just off the road in the brush partly behind a

log. I didn't see much of the water snake because it kept moving and was partly hidden behind that log. We also encountered other people who were there to walk the road.

When we could, we walked along the base of the bluffs and found a few more water moccasins. Later on we found we were at the location where the timber rattlesnake was but it was gone. We continued walking the road saw more people and arrived at the other parking lot. Scott and Tony were going to hike to the next lake but I decided that it was time to start heading home. I was sure I could get back to my truck by 2:00 P.M. for the five hour drive home.

My walk back was uneventful except for eleven more water moccasins and several more hikers. I again met the guy who had showed pictures of the red milk snake and mud snake the day before. I did not see any turtles or lizards for the whole weekend.

What I did see was:

- One black rat snake
- 34 cottonmouth water moccasins
- One rough green snake
- Two yellow belly water snakes
- One D.O.R diamond back water snake
- One timber rattlesnake
- Several Fowler toads and American toads
- A lot of small frogs jumping out of the way.

The HHS would like to thank the following for their contributions:

- Roger Carter for taking over the Treasurer position.
- Ed Ferrer for writing monthly articles for the newsletter and arranging guest speaker presentations.
- Barbara Filtri for her year-long efforts managing the HHS website.
- Angela Thomas for conducting the monthly raffle.
- Jim Horton for creating and editing each monthly newsletter.

30th Midwest Herpetological Symposium

By Jim Horton



This year the symposium was held November 6-8, in Madison WI. The six hour drive was a breeze and we were there in no time.

HHS members in attendance were – Roger and Holly Carter, Pat Hammond, Neil Jones, Mary Hylton, and Jim Horton



HHS members group shot.

The conference was held downtown in Madison so dining and everything else was within walking distance. The Hilton hotel was beautiful with a great view.

Friday evening included hors d' oeuvres and a cash bar followed by two talks. Phil Goss, President of U.S.A.R.K. gave an informative talk about the state of the reptile nation.

Keynote speaker, Dave Barker's presentation included a brief chronological story of his life and times as a field herper, breeder, and zoo curator. Mike Krick was there (all the way from New Mexico) with a huge display of herp-related books for purchase. Another nice touch was an array of framed photos of every herp in Wisconsin. The photos would be auctioned off Saturday night.

Saturday was filled with a great variety of presentations throughout the day. Talks included reptile rescues, reptile fungus diseases, finding queen snakes, the truth about animal rights organizations, massasauga rattlesnake surveys, veterinary medicine for herps, crocodylian conservation and education, rattlesnake roundups, and more.

After a nice banquet, the keynote speaker, Mr. Dave Barker, delivered a stark and meaningful talk titled - *"The Invisible Ark-In Defense of Captivity"*.



Dave Barker presenting keynote address.

Mr. Barker really knows how to reach an audience and his talk came through loud and clear.

The silent and live auctions ended the evening and many unique items were available for bid. This is the main source of fundraising for the hosting society. Phil Goss (USARK) was the auctioneer and he did a fantastic job.



Having fun at the live auction.

Our visit to the Henry Vilas Zoo was our last stop before heading back to Indy. There was no admission to this zoo and it had a nice herpetarium with well kept animals and displays.



Giant Aldabra tortoises at the zoo.

Ryan McVeigh and the Madison Area Herpetological Society did an outstanding job as first time hosts for this event!

SWORDS AND HERP ART (Part 3)

Photos & text by Roger Carter

This sword is thirty-six inches long and shows a snake at the end of the handle with its mouth open as if it is striking at someone. The color is mostly black except for the blade which is probably stainless steel and is sharp. There is a gold band near the hilt with the word "CHINA" on both sides.



HERPETOLOGICAL EVENTS

December 6, 2015 - Indiana Reptile Expo in Noblesville, IN on the first Sunday of each month from 10 AM to 4 PM at the Hamilton County Exhibition Center & 4-H Grounds.

December 12, 2015 – HHS Holiday Party. Dales Family Dining, 5209 E. Thompson Rd. Indianapolis (317)757.8626

June 22-25, 2016 - International Herpetological Symposium, St. Louis, MO.

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